

Dava's Talent

by Lee Ebler

Dava loved sheep. He loved their cries and their thick coats. He loved to play with the lambs and he especially loved to fill the woosack when Papa sheared. Dava's papa was a shepherd, and his family lived near a river and mountains in a small village in Morocco.

Dava thought sheep were wonderful, but he could not herd them very well. When he wanted them to go right, they went left. When he wanted them to go uphill, they went downhill. And when he wanted them to drink, they stood in the brook and splashed while Dava got wet and sneezy.

"All your forefathers have been shepherds," said Uncle Eban. "Why won't the sheep obey you?"

"I don't know," said Dava sadly.

"Maybe if you wear Papa's clothes," suggested his sister Leah, "the sheep will think you're Papa and mind you."

So Dava put on Papa's *djellabah*. [A *djellabah* is a loose hooded piece of clothing that hangs from the shoulders.] The sleeves covered his hands, and the hem dragged on the ground. When he walked toward the sheep, he tripped and fell. The sheep were not fooled. While Dava struggled out of the *djellabah*, they got into the garden and ate the melons.

"Perhaps you should walk slower when you lead the sheep," said Mama. "Sheep do not like bouncy shepherds."

So Dava walked slowly. But he was so slow that the sheep thought he was a tree. They chewed on his sash, leaving it sticky and shredded. Dava decided that walking slowly wasn't the answer.

"Every shepherd has a talent to offer," said Papa. "When you find yours, the sheep will obey. Uncle Eban plays the flute. My talent is singing. We both lead the herd with our music."

"Maybe I'm a singer like Papa," said Dava to Bright Eyes, the smallest sheep. He began to sing in a loud voice about streams and green grass. He thought he had found his talent until Leah chased him away from the house.

"Your singing sounds like rocks falling!" she said, slamming the door.

"I will loan you my flute," said Uncle Eban. "It's clear that you are not a singer."

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 3
LA.3.2.1.7 Form A

So Dava played the flute. He practiced inside the sheep pen until Uncle Eban stuck wool in his ears and the sheep began to bleat. They did not like his flute playing.

"You screech like a hawk!" said Uncle Eban, taking back the flute. "You're scaring the sheep."

"I will never be a good shepherd," said Dava to Bright Eyes.

One day a terrible thing happened. Papa and Uncle Eban were repairing the stone wall. They were working fast because a storm was coming. Suddenly one of the rocks fell on Papa's foot. Dava could see that it hurt. He started toward papa, but Uncle Eban stopped him.

"I'll take your papa home, but you must lead the sheep back by yourself. Take them slowly, as you have learned."

"But I can't," said Dava. "The sheep won't listen to me."

"Please try," said Uncle Eban.

Dava watched Papa and Uncle Eban leave. The sky was getting dark, and the wind was rising. The sheep began to bleat.

Dava picked up the staff and swished it around. "Hoy!" he shouted. "Hoy, Trud and Bright Eyes. Hoy, Spots!"

But the sheep did not listen. Thunder echoed over the mountains, and the frightened sheep moved toward the broken wall. If Dava didn't stop them, they would run into the desert.

Almost without thinking, Dava began to whistle softly. The sheep didn't hear it, but the whistle calmed Dava. So he whistled louder. Beside him, Bright Eyes stopped trembling.

Then Dava had an idea. He stood in the center of the herd and whistled. He whistled a hopeful tune, a cheerful tune, an everything's-all-right tune. And the sheep understood. They grew calm, because Dava was calm. Still whistling, Dava led them toward the pen. He knew the sheep trusted him now. He felt as if he were part of the flock.

I am a whistler, thought Dava, smiling.

The sheep came safely home that day, and Papa was soon feeling well enough to hear Dava's story.



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LA.3.2.1.7 Form A

Name _____ **Date** _____

Directions: Read the passage and choose the correct answer.

1. Read this sentence from the story.

**He whistled a hopeful tune, a cheerful tune, an everything's-all-right tune.
And the sheep understood.**

What does it mean to whistle *an everything's-all-right tune*?

- A. to whistle loudly
- B. to whistle skillfully
- C. to whistle excitedly
- D. to whistle encouragingly

2. Read this sentence from the passage.

“Your singing sounds like rocks falling!” she said, slamming the door.

What quality applies to Dava’s singing and rocks falling?

- A. loud tunes
- B. unpleasant sounds
- C. amusing noises
- D. pleasing notes

3. Read these sentences from the story.

**Dava watched Papa and Uncle Eban leave. The sky was getting dark, and
the wind was rising. The sheep began to bleat.**

What mood does the author create by writing that the *sky was getting dark and the wind was rising*?

- A. serious
- B. annoyed
- C. sad
- D. disappointed

<p style="text-align: center;">Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 3 LA.3.2.1.7 Form A</p>
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4. How does the author create a mood of hopelessness about Dava's herding skills at the start of the story?
- A. by describing what the sheep look like
 - B. by including Dava's feelings about the sheep
 - C. by explaining that Dava's father and his uncle are shepherds
 - D. by listing things the sheep did that were opposite of Dava's wishes

Reading Mini-Assessment Grade 3
LA.3.2.1.7 Form A

ANSWER KEY

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Item #	Answer
1.	D
2.	B
3.	A
4.	D

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